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BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

REMARKS ON A PASSAGE OF ADDISON.

GENTLEMEN,

THOUGH I have been always disposed to respect great names, and pay to genius and learning that deference, to which they are justly entitled, yet I have always endeavoured to guard against the impropriety of receiving the opinions even of those who are most celebrated for their understanding and wisdom, with undistinguishing approbation. In short, I have on all occasions, made it a point, to judge for myself; and to be exceeding tenacious of what I conceived on mature reflection, to be the right view of any subject notwithstanding that I found very great authorities to be against me.

With such a disposition, I have often reflected on a passage of our admired Addison, in one of his papers in the spectator; and though I have lately considered it with attention, I still retain those sentiments of disapprobation, which originally impressed themselves on my mind; perhaps a few words expressive of my sentiments on the subject may not be uninteresting to some of your readers.

In No. 106, he introduces an account of Sir Roger de Coverley's Chaplain, towards the close of which he represents the Knight as giving him this information concerning him. "At his first settling with me, I made him a present of all the good sermons which have been printed in English, and only begged of him, that every Sunday he would pronounce one of them in the pulpit. Accordingly he has digested them into such a series, that they follow one another naturally, and make a continued system of practical divinity." HAV-

BELFAST MAG. NO. XIX.

ing gone to hear him preach, and being greatly pleased with the performance, he concludes the paper with the following observations: "I could heartily wish, that more of our country clergy would follow this example; and instead of wasting their spirits in laborious compositions of their own, would endeavour after a handsome elocution, and all those other talents, that are proper to enforce what has been penned by greater masters. This would not only be more easy to themselves, but more edifying to the people."

I have no objection that those who desire to enter into the sacerdotal office, should endeavour to improve themselves in elocution. On the contrary, I consider this as a very necessary accomplishment; and while so much pains are taken by lawyers, senators, and even stage players, to acquire an elegant and impressive manner of delivery, it is a shame and disgrace, that those who prepare themselves for the discharge of the sacred functions, should in general pay so little attention to this subject. Are the matters of which they treat of less importance? And is it fitting that less care and attention should be employed to recommend the momentous subjects of religion, and immortality, to the respect and acceptance of mankind?

But to the other sentiments in the above extract, I strongly object. I do not approve of a preacher's confining himself closely to a system, and for this reason, that *occasional* discourses are often very proper, and calculated to have a very good effect upon the minds of the people. As it is right for men in general to pay respect to the various dispensations of divine providence, so it is I conceive, the duty of a minister of religion to impress

a sense of their important and interesting nature on the minds of the people. Such well-timed suggestions, are fitted to have a more abiding and affecting influence than the most elaborate discourses on ordinary topics. Add to this, that it is unquestionably a pastor's duty, continually to advert to the state of the society over which he presides; and to adopt his discourses to the exigencies of his flock. He is to meet the prevailing vices of the times, by seasonable admonitions and exhortations. He is as it were to keep his hand always extended over his people, that he may protect them from the shafts of infidelity, the unhallowed rage of fanatics, the contagion of bad example, and every other evil that might endanger their peace, virtue, and happiness. Now, it is obvious, that this pastoral care cannot possibly be manifested by a minister, who year after year delivers the same round of discourses, be they ever so well selected and harmonized into system.

Again, the view which Mr. Addison gives us of the chaplain's labours as a preacher, furnishes us with a very low and mean idea of the pastoral office, and not at all correspondent with the representations of scripture on this head. The apostolic writings represent the preaching of the gospel as a matter of great labour and exertion, and that demanded the full exercise of the mental energies; whereas in Mr. Addison's view any man who can purchase the best sermons can, if he have a good aspect and clear voice, fully discharge without giving himself any farther trouble than that of copying, all pulpit duties, agreeably to the instructions of scripture. In my mind, such indolence and sluggishness are utterly unworthy of the ministerial character. It is necessary for every person diligently to study the doctrines of religion, and surely much more is this incumbent on a minister of the gospel. Let him avail himself of the assistance of commentators and divines, but let him realize for himself the principles of religion, and show to the people the fruits of his labours. Thus it is probable he will preach with more warmth, energy, and ef-

fect. It is impossible I should suppose, for a man to deliver the compositions of others with the same earnestness and fervour, as those which have proceeded from his own exertions. To interest a discerning audience, a man must speak with feeling. His words must flow,

" Warm from the heart, and to the heart address'd."

and how shall this be done so effectually, by a speaker, as when the subject is his own, when his heart glows with a generous enthusiasm, when his mind is full of light, and his imagination fired, by the impressive theme? It is not enough that he who discourses on the divine subject of religion should only *seem* to feel. He *must* feel, if he be sincere, and have a proper apprehension of the importance of the pastoral office.

It will be said, that there are many who are so unskilful in composing, that it is more for the edification of their people for them to read the compositions of others. To this I answer, that he who cannot compose discourses, that are calculated to promote edification and improvement, is utterly unqualified for the pastoral office: just as no one would imagine that physician acquainted with his profession, who prescribed to his patients merely from the knowledge, and upon the authority of others. A minister who knows not how to address his people from the information of his own mind, is unworthy of the sacred office, and should not presume to preach the gospel. It is impossible he can acquit himself in a manner creditable to himself, or advantageous to his people.

But what then is to become of those who are at present in holy orders, and have to lament their deficiency in this respect? I am disposed to think, that their inability to compose good or interesting discourses, arises chiefly from their want of study, attention, and application. The remedy therefore is, be more studious and diligent in future; avail yourselves of the best helps to composition; compose often and with care; be indefatigable in your exertions; and by studying the best models, you can scarcely fail to arrive at least

at mediocrity, in this most necessary accomplishment. It is very disgusting to hear men who have had good opportunities, say they cannot compose. The truth is, they will not take the trouble to compose. A good style of composition is not to be attained by one effort; it is the effect of repeated attempts, and persevering exertions.

I doubt not but Mr. Addison's sentiments have operated with many of our clergy, who might have made a very respectable figure as preachers, on their own foundation, and from the resources of their own minds. Borrowing this sentiment from such high authority, men who might have figured in the republic of letters, and been ornaments to true religion, have perhaps slumbered away their days in listless inactivity and ease. Let candidates for the ministry beware of such examples. Let them only know them, that they may guard against their pernicious influence; let them understand that they must store their minds with useful knowledge, and prepare themselves to preach their own discourses to the people, if they desire to fill their situations with credit, and faithfully to discharge one important branch of the duties of the christian ministry. I am, &c.

BENEVOLUS.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

Account of an apparatus for teaching arithmetic to children, experienced to be of much benefit.

THE mechanical apparatus for teaching arithmetic before writing, is as follows.

Twelve printed figures of each of the digits, and of cyphers, are pasted to wooden tablets, of one inch in length, $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in breadth, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch in thickness, with a projecting peg from the centre of the tablet. The tablets are of birch, turned and cut to the above shape. A mahogany board on ledges, is pierced with 144 holes, which receive the pegs of the tablets, so that their edges nearly touch. The centres of four of these holes are the corners of a rectangle, a little larger than one of the tablets. The board rests on a table.

The tablets are disposed separately in ten boxes on the right and left of the board. It is obvious that addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, can be conveniently learned by such a table, provided the examples do not run to a great number of places. By such a table a child can readily acquire a practical knowledge of the rules it learns. He may begin by setting down the numbers in the natural series, and in columns of tens. Then he may proceed to learn addition practically, thus; let the question be, what is the sum of two and three? he marks two holes in one column, and three in another, and then reckoning down one, and up another, he finds the sum 5. In a similar manner is subtraction performed; and in multiplication, let the question be, what is the product of two and three? he takes three columns of two, and reckoning them all over he finds the sum.



It would be easy to point out various advantages in this method, above that of getting the products by rote.

As to the improvement of this apparatus, I suppose the tablets may be conveniently reduced to half the linear magnitude, by this means four times as many tablets will be required, and computations may be extended to twice the number of places. The pierced board must not be much larger than I describe, otherwise the child's hands will not reach its extremities, and the farthest boxes of tablets conveniently. A similar plan might answer for teaching to spell.

We have been favoured with the account of the above apparatus for teaching arithmetic, by a gentleman of high and well deserved rank in the learned world, who has experienced it to be of the greatest utility in teaching his own children.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

SAINCLAIR,

Continued from p. 13, No. XVIII.

ABOUT this time Sainclair met with a young girl of the age of